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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

Intelligence Memorandum

Elections in Iran

Secret

23

1 August 1967
No. 1372/67

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
1 August 1967

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Elections in Iran

Summary

Iran will hold elections on 4 August for the Senate and the Majlis (lower house). The candidates of both the government and opposition parties have been carefully selected by the Shah and other top officials to ensure complete support in Parliament for the Shah's programs. The elections, therefore, will have no impact on Iranian domestic or foreign policies and the entire process has been marked by almost total public apathy. An election will be held concurrently for a Constituent Assembly, which will be empowered to amend the regency provisions of the constitution.

Note: This memorandum was produced solely by CIA. It was prepared by the Office of Current Intelligence and coordinated with the Office of National Estimates and with the Clandestine Services.

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Parliamentary Elections

1. On 4 August the voters in Iran will choose 219 deputies for the Majlis and 30 for the Senate; 30 other members of the Senate are appointed by the Shah. The government has made a concerted effort to create the impression of free elections by allowing two candidates in many constituencies and by emphasizing the participation of the political parties in the selection of their candidates. The selection actually has been carefully controlled by the government, and the Shah himself returned to Tehran from vacation to give final approval to the list of the ruling Iran Novin party candidates.

2. The Shah ordered in May that a secret committee be formed to ensure that all candidates were politically reliable and stable individuals. [REDACTED] 5X1C

25X1C [REDACTED] he also instructed party leaders to use the utmost discretion in submitting the names of potential candidates. The parties submitted their suggestions through the prime minister's office to the National Intelligence and Security Organization (SAVAK), which was responsible for checking out each name. The special election committee then divided the names into "recommended," "suitable," and "unsuitable" categories and sent them to the party leaders for the selection of their final slates.

25X1C 3. [REDACTED] X1C [REDACTED] the new Majlis will have about 150 deputies from the Iran Novin party and about 40 from the opposition Mardom party. The remainder of the seats will be filled by members of the Pan Iran party and independents. An analysis of the candidates of the Iran Novin party indicates an effort by the government to upgrade the Majlis. Of the 67 former members of Parliament who were dropped from the Iran Novin list, most were farmers, workers, and land

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reform officials. They have been replaced in most instances by well-educated professionals; 80 percent of the Iran Novin candidates are college graduates. Several officials have indicated that the emphasis on professionalism is indicative of a shift from revolution to consolidation in the Shah's reform program.

4. Minister of the Interior Abdol Reza Ansari has assured a US Embassy official that his ministry would be strictly impartial in the conduct of the election, and would make no attempt to get out the vote or to support individual candidates. The ministry was criticized in the 1963 elections for actively rounding up voters, and in some instances telling them for whom to vote. By late June, the ministry apparently was fully organized for the election and was making plans for coverage of the returns by radio and possibly by TV.

5. The US Embassy and the consulates report widespread public apathy and disinterest in the elections. Iranians in Tehran are reported to see little point in getting excited about something over which they have little influence. The press has not done much to dispel public apathy, and the journals, by disparaging the political parties and ridiculing the calibre of Parliament, have complicated any efforts by the regime to inject life into the elections.

6. The outcome of the elections is generally a foregone conclusion and there will be no real opposition, no real debate on policy issues, and thus no meaningful choice among the candidates. The Shah is highly sensitive to foreign criticism about the lack of political choice in Iran. Earlier this year, in response to a question from a US National War College group, the Shah reiterated his conviction that political parties will have to "mature"

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in order to defend properly the interests of the nation. He is clearly determined to achieve more economic and social progress before he will risk active opposition groups in Iranian political life.

The Constituent Assembly

7. Elections will also be held on 4 August for a Constituent Assembly, some of whose members will also be members of Parliament. The assembly has been called at the request of the Shah to examine and amend the articles of the constitution pertaining to succession. The assembly is expected to authorize the Shah to appoint a regent to rule if he should die before the Crown Prince is of age, and all indications are that the Shah will appoint Queen Farah. He has absolute faith in her loyalty, and she has proven to be competent, popular, and actively interested in the reform program.

8. This is the first time that the Shah has been willing to face the succession problem and to provide for an orderly transition in the event of his early demise. It reflects his growing self-confidence, his faith in Queen Farah, and for the first time the availability of a potential regent whom he could appoint without producing intensified jockeying for power and possibly hastening his own demise.

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☐ DISSEM AUTHORIZATION

MEMO NO 1372/67 DATE 1 Aug '67

Due D/OCI Review
Dates: Dissem 1 Aug 67

SUBJECT: Elections in Iran

REQUESTED OR ORIGINATED BY: Self-initiated

PURPOSE: A quick look at the upcoming elections and how the government assures its choices will win.

ASSIGNED TO: [REDACTED] /AA/A GRAPHICS BOAC

COORDINATE ONE/DDP
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1. August 1967

Talking Paper for "Elections in Iran"

1. This memorandum was produced by OCI to provide background for understanding the parliamentary elections scheduled for 4 August.

2. The elections will choose 219 deputies and 30 senators who will serve for the next four years. Only the first three or four of the 22 elections held during the last 60 years were completely free. This one will be no freer than most. Although some choice is being allowed in a few constituencies, all candidates are being carefully chosen under the direction of the Shah.

3. There is little public enthusiasm; long experience with elections has produced an air of apathy and a certainty that the government's choices will always be elected.

4. Recommend routine internal and external dissem.

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